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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 000446

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS AND DRL/BA

LONDON FOR POL - RIEGEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM NP

SUBJECT: TALES FROM TRIBHUVAN HOSPITAL: MAOIST VICTIMS  
TELL THEIR STORIES

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CIVILIAN SUFFERING  
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11. (U) In addition to the 650 policemen and 90 Royal Nepal Army soldiers they have killed, Maoists have beaten, stabbed, shot or burned to death nearly 400 civilians since the insurgency began in 1996--more than 50 of those victims in just the three months since the insurgents unilaterally broke off the ceasefire November 23. Most of the Maoists' civilian targets are local government officials, teachers, or supporters of the governing Nepali Congress Party. The number of civilians injured, maimed, or assaulted by the insurgents is unknown, but each day the government-owned Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Kathmandu admits and treats victims of such attacks. On Feb. 26 Tribhuvan staff reported treating 25 patients (including 7 Armed Police victims of a landmine) for injuries sustained from Maoist attacks. Poloff visited and interviewed some of the victims; highlights of their stories follow below.

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KHAGENDRA RAJ REGMI  
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12. (SBU) On the night of Feb. 9 three armed Maoists knocked on the door of Khagendra Raj Regmi, District Committee Chairman of the Nepali Congress Party and brother of Prime Minister Deuba's Chief Secretary, in Syangja District in western Nepal. Regmi said when he came out, he observed an additional 30 or so Maoists had surrounded his house. The Maoists asked Regmi to come with them to an undisclosed location, but he refused. The assailants then shot him three times (twice in the chest; one bullet grazed his head and hit his hand) and fled. Regmi's entire family has left their home in the district and relocated to Kathmandu.

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PADAM PRASAD SILWAL  
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13. (SBU) On the morning of Feb. 18, a group of five Maoists, armed with pistols, guns, and khukuri knives, approached Padam Prasad Silwal, a Nepali Congress supporter and small shopowner, as he sat on the porch of his home in Chitwan District in south-central Nepal. According to Silwal, the armed men suddenly began to stab him in the head, back and hands, completely chopping off one of his fingers. A son who tried to shield his father was shot and wounded. Silwal said he had frequently been approached by Maoists in the past for "donations," especially fuel from his small gas pump, and had always complied with their demands. He has no idea why he was targeted and did not recognize any of his attackers. He, his wife, and three sons (one of whom is recovering in another hospital) have fled their village, leaving all their belongings behind them, and are afraid to return. They have no way to support themselves while in Kathmandu. One son bitterly described the family as "refugees."

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CHATTRA RAJ BHANDARI  
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14. (SBU) Chattra Raj Bhandari said he was attacked by a band of about 35 Maoists at his home the night of December 23. The group forced him out of his house, tied his hands behind his back, and beat him on the head, hands, and legs with an iron rod. A farmer from Phrkot Village in Tanahu District, Bhandari said he suspects he was targeted because he supports (but is not an organizer for) the Nepali Congress Party.

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KURMI DAGAURA CHAUDHARI  
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15. (SBU) About midnight on January 25, Kurmi Dagaura Chaudhari of Banskati, Kailali, was forced out of his house, along with his cousin, by a group of 12 insurgents. Both men were severely beaten, dragged more than a kilometer from their home, dumped into a ditch and left for dead. Chaudhari regained consciousness by early morning, however, climbed out of the ditch, and made it back home (despite his broken arms and legs). His cousin did not survive the attack. Chaudhari, the village postman, said he is not affiliated with any political party but used to urge young people in his neighborhood, which is heavily affected by the insurgency, not to join the Maoists. His village is about 70 km from the nearest sizable presence of Government security forces . He said he did not recognize any of his attackers.

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COMMENT  
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16. (SBU) Since the beginning of the insurgency, the Maoists have attacked civilians they consider class enemies, but as the state of emergency and subsequent Army mobilization limit the range of military targets available, the volume of attacks against civilians seems to be sharply increasing. In the early days of the conflict, the Maoists sought to popularize a romantic notion of themselves as champions of the common man or woman against Government oppression. But none of the victims interviewed at Tribhuvan was powerful, prosperous, or (with the possible exception of Regmi's family connections) even influential. While Maoist brutality may succeed in spreading fear, it can only undermine rural popular support for the insurgency.

Malinowski